

A JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

Vol. IV, No. 1

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Feb., 1944

One urgent plea --- please keep us posted about any changes of address! In these days when people are moving about so continually, a mailing list belongs in the Department of Utter Confusion. We must depend on you to keep your correct address in our files.

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GROUP VIII M.L.A. NEWS

As stated in a letter from the National Secretary, the policy of the Association is that "Group officers and committeemen of 1943 shall continue unchanged in 1944, except for changes proposed by their Advisory and Nominating Committee, and accepted by the 1943 Chairman, who shall continue in office until his successor has accepted." Thus your editor will continue as Chairman, and Dick Greene (Rochester) as Secretary for this next year.

If a general meeting is held next Christmas, it will be in the East, probably in New York City.

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SHORT-TITLE CATALOGUE

Jim Tobin (Fordham) sends in the following comments: "To continue making index card entries for any bibliography of size at this time is to take literally the listing in a recent catalogue: The gentleman's recreation in folio, slightly foxed. However slowly, work has progressed on the Short-Title Catalogue, 1700-1735, and preliminary checking has been done on some 52,000 titles (and editions). These items, approximately one third of the final total, have been typed

in duplicate and arranged alphabetically by title or author and by title page dates.

"Problems are obvious: present erroneous listings; variant titles (as in auction catalogues); publisher's announcements -- well-intentioned future appearances or ill-intentioned number-juggling of editions; lack of attention to sizes on library call cards -- and contradictions from list to list; the nightmares of initials, pseudonyms, dual and triple attributions of anonymous works.

"Some correspondents have expressed the desire that all point variants and cancels be included and indicated, but the time needed for such collating (except in the case of title pages) makes this task impossible. There have been calls for inclusion of the names of translators, writers of prefaces, etc.; for subtitles, at least where reference is made to other pamphlets, as in the Bangorian controversy; for fuller titles than the bare entry form now obtaining.

"Others ask for addition of bracketed information: surely this is necessary when Humphrey Johnson's Youth's recreation (1711) turns out to be a manual of penmanship, Abraham Flavel's The Husbandman's disputations (1705) a justification of infant baptism, and Yet plainer English (1705) advice on the shortest way to convict murderers. Some attempt, too, should be made to enlarge the cross-references, to preclude such later (though ominently worthwhile) labors as Professor H. A. White's."

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MEMBERS IN SERVICE

Henry Pettit writes: "At present I am Executive Officer of the Navy V-12 Unit, Mississippi College, Clinton, Miss. I wish I could give

you something 18th century, but I can't get back of the Siege of Vicksburg and am surprised to find that few of the natives have gotten over it."

Ernest Mossner, as he puts it, "by some quirk of Army Intelligence," is now in the Engineer Corps of the Army--- just completed basic training, and going on to advanced work. His address is Co. B, 3d. BN, ERTC, Fort Belvoir, Va.

A. B. Shepperson's new address is Navy 136, Fleet Radio Unit, Care Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.

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PERSONALS

Dixon Webster has just been awarded a \$2,500 prize by Houghton Mifflin, Publishers, in their Life in America Series, for a book to be called When Johnny Comes Marching Home. It is a study of the soldier's return in 1783, 1865, and 1919, and will be published early in the spring.

Those of you who have been wondering what has happened to Jim Osborn lately had better get hold of a copy of New England Homestead for Dec. 11, 1943, and read about "The Professor of Whirlwind Hill" and what he is doing with his dairy farm.

What do you know about the expert breeding of cows, of the varying percentages of butter fat, of feeding formulae, special problems of milk distribution, and scientific agronomy? Jim can give you all the answers, and tell you how to make your herd one of the finest in the country. He can, because he has done just that with his Holsteins at Wallingford, Conn.

Jim has thus been doing a major job in the production of food, in addition to holding various respon-

sible posts in the ARP Training Program. No wonder he has had little time for 18th century scholarship. But the latest word is that he "hopes" to pull Malone out of the files sometime soon.

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DETECTIVE SAM JOHNSON AGAIN

Those of you who like a good story and are not particularly worried by the infusion of a little pure fiction into staid historical fact take our advice and pick up a copy of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine for March. Here you will find another story by Lillian de la Torre (Mrs. George McCue), with Johnson and Boswell playing the parts of Holmes and Watson.

The story this time is entitled "Dr. Sam Johnson and Prince Charlie's Ruby", and the setting is Kingsburgh in the Isle of Skye, at the time of the famous Tour in 1773. We will not give away the plot which we think you will enjoy. As smoothly written historical fiction, this story makes delightful reading.

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A QUERY

Bertrand Bronson (19 Trowbridge St. Cambridge, Mass.) is trying to exhaust the printed and manuscript records of tunes for the Child ballads down to 1900. If any reader has run across such tunes in unlikely places, particularly in 18th century manuscripts, Bronson would be grateful for a note of the discovery.

Several items which he is anxious to find in this country are: [Henry Playford] Collection of Original Scotch-Tunes, (Full of Highland Humours) for the Violin. London, 1700; [Allan Ramsay] Musick for the Scots Songs in the Tea-Table Miscellany. Edinburgh, n.d. but c. 1725.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND

All Johnsonians will be much interested, we know, in an item recently sent over by Kenneth Sisam of the Oxford Press. As announced in the London Times of Dec. 17, the annual Christmas gift of the King and Queen to British prisoners of war and interned persons in Europe this year was the incomplete edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, edited by L. F. Powell.

The Times adds: "One hundred and twelve sets were sent off by the Indoor Recreation Section of the Joint War Organization from June onwards, so that each camp in Germany should have the royal gift set in its library by Christmas...."

"This is the third successive year that a royal gift of books has gone to British prisoners in Europe. The previous two gifts consisted of a selection of about 40 standard British classics. When the books were sent a number of sets were addressed to the libraries of Italian camps, but it is possible that some of the books were diverted to the newer German camps by the International Red Cross authorities at Genova. In any case the gift is large enough to ensure that all known prisoner of war and internment camps on the continent will each receive a set."

As to the prospect of any completion of Powell's edition in the near future, Sisam comments that volume 5 will be held until volume 6 can be printed, and that cannot be until after the war is over.

Sisam concludes his letter: "I write just before Christmas, having spent two unpleasant days lately on a railway system now glutted with traffic and starved of staff. I saw a great many of your United States officers and men waiting on the desolate, rain-swept platforms for trains so late that even the porters seemed to have lost the hope of identifying them; and it seemed to me that they will carry home with them a very strange idea of this country if they didn't know it before the war. Then we

used to look forward to getting on an English train after a visit to the Continent, occupying a Pullman or at least an empty carriage, and calling for tea and bread and butter and hot toast. Now the holder of a first-class ticket is lucky to get a comfortable standing place in the corridor, and has given up the hope of picking up snacks at stations by the way.

"So I expect a great many of your soldiers, when they do come home, will be convinced isolationists and won't want to travel again. All the more reason why the scholars should make up their minds to visit us when they can."

Bill Powell (U.of Pa.) Lieut. (JG) U.S.N.R. writes: "I've been with the Staff of LST Flotilla Two just a year today. Originally I was designated as a Communication Officer but once the Commander had wind of the fact that I had taught English, I became his Flag Secretary -- doomed to fight the war on paper."

After some time in North Africa, which he describes vividly, Powell has been shifted to England where he finds the people always "ready to welcome a few more", and then comments, "after our reception the myth of English reserve will be extinguished forever."

"I've just come back from a five-day leave (my first in over a year) in London and Cambridge.... Of course one of my first trips was to Fleet Street, Gough Square, and the Cheshire Cheese. Unfortunately the latter has been rather badly damaged by a fire (not the result of bombs, I understand) and consequently they are currently limiting their activities to the bar."

"I spent a very pleasant hour with Mrs. Rowell at the Johnson House. She has a host of fascinating stories about the efforts of the Fire Service in saving the House and how she herself extinguished a fire bomb in the attic. Just after returning from the funeral of her mother who had died of shock from the previous blitz.

"All the treasures have been removed from the house, of course, and it is now used by the Fire Service as a recreation center for their men. This was Lord Harmsworth's wish since the Fire Service had taken special risks to save the building. Mrs. Rowell is very proud of two recent gifts -- the writing desk and dressing table which belonged to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter.

"While at Cambridge, I went out to Trumpington to see Christopher Anstey's estate. It is currently occupied by a Training School of the National Fire Service but its 18th century charm is still unspoiled.

"Cambridge has been vastly changed by the war. Only a few bombs have fallen -- one on Pembroke, I understand -- but the great majority of the students are in uniform taking technical courses. The only librarian left at Kings is an elderly German refugee so that research is almost impossible. A similar situation confronts you at the British Museum, of course where each reader is limited to six books a day, and must read them while bundled up in a coat and gloves (The main reading room is closed and only the North Reading room is being used)."

In another letter to Dick Altick he gives further information: "We had a mournful walk around the shell of St. Clements and the Temple Church and Middle Temple Hall. They are even more depressing than the streets and churches around St. Paul's because in the latter area everything is levelled and the ruins have been cleaned up... Westminster Abbey has had a number of near misses, but one doesn't notice any real damage. Not so the houses of Parliament. A small bomb took off the corner of Big Ben. Westminster Hall has a partially new roof and the House of Commons is no more....

"St. Paul's has a bomb crater in front of the altar and considerable damage in the North Transept but the place is so vast that one hardly notices the destruction.

Wellington's tomb is bricked up for the duration."

He closes: "There you are, and now there's no necessity for you to buy that new Oxford Press book of the Bombed-out Buildings of Britain." In which your editor concurs. There is more specific news here than in half of A.C. Ward's recent book. It seems as if personal letters are less censored than official documents.

Dr. Henry Guppy, Librarian of the John Rylands Library in Manchester, writes that nine members of his staff are in the armed forces. "Taylor is in the Navy, Hall is in the Air Force, and the others are scattered. One of the Juniors came home a few days ago with the Distinguished Flying Cross and his Commission. He had made thirteen flights in seven days, and brought his battered, perforated aircraft and its crew of eight back to safety.

"Your title of "News Letter" brought to my mind the collection of ms. news letters of 1667-1669 which I purchased some years ago, and my impulse was to drag them forth and refresh my mind as to their contents. Unfortunately they are amongst the evacuated material and I must wait for the approaching war free days.

"Should any Johnsonian notes come to my notice that are not likely to have come to your net, I will send you a contribution."

One of the most ardent Piozzians in England has been Mrs. Herbert Evans, the occupant of Brynbella, the lovely half-Italian villa which Mrs. Piczzi built in North Wales. Now because of the recent death of her husband, Mrs. Evans is forced to give up Brynbella and remove to Sudbury in Suffolk. Memories of many happy days spent in the beautiful house, looking out across the Vale of Clwyd, prompt this sad notice. No longer will Brynbella seem the same without its brilliant and gracious hostess, in many ways so like the original owner of the house.

We have had two comments on the reference in our last issue to A.L. Reade's walking accomplishments. Reade himself replies that he wishes we had been along, "and perhaps made the pace." He adds: "You look just the build for walking, and wars or no wars we may still have a jaunt together some day." So you see what your editor is in for. He is already lame in anticipation.

Walter Graham (III.) comments: "As one who has walked with both A.L. Reade and L.F. Powell, I find it fascinating to try to picture to myself the latter 'licking the blisters on his feet.' This must be one of his recent accomplishments. He has often walked me into a state bordering on collapse -- in the good pre-war days. Perhaps there is some justice in the world after all. In any event, I'd still like to see Powell do it!"

Peter Pineo Chase of Providence has sent on a letter written last October to the late H. S. Chafee by C. H. Harper of Birmingham, Eng.

"As you know", he writes, "my home is near Lichfield and on the nearest Sunday to the 18th of September, every year Dr. Johnson's Birthday is celebrated. In normal times it is quite a big affair and includes a Meeting in the Guildhall in the afternoon with the President's address -- the President is always a leading literary man. In England the annual dinner takes place in the Old Guildhall. The tables are set as in Johnson's time, lighted with candles, and the celebrated beefsteak pudding is one of the particular items, not forgetting the Punch, which I understand is rather potent, but in which I do not indulge.

"During the war the celebration takes place at mid-day with the officials of the Corporation all in their different uniforms. With the mace, they walk across from the Guildhall to Johnson's monument, on which the Mayor places a wreath to the immortal memory of Dr. Samuel Johnson, and all being in their academic robes, with the boys in their

scarlet cassocks (there are 30 of them) -- they present a very pleasing and colorful spectacle, especially this year when the September sun shone very brilliantly.

After the placing of the wreath by the Mayor, the Cathedral Choir sang two hymns.... Of course the choir sang the hymns as only a Cathedral Choir can sing and the whole ceremony was indeed delightful."

Despite the war the things that matter are not forgotten!

R. W. Chapman forges on at a great rate with his edition of Johnson's letters. If the number of notes and queries which your editor constantly receives is any indication, the volumes are well on the way to publication.

A correction -- the address of Mr. Culpin, who sent over the query about bookworms, should have been listed as Wirral, Cheshire.

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ENGLISH INSTITUTE ANNUAL

Some of our readers may remember that way back in September, 1942, your editor, fresh from the stimulus of the last meeting of the English Institute, made the brash statement that he thought the program that fall had been the best so far. Perhaps the aura lingers on, for he still looks back with nostalgic pleasure to those three days of concentrated high thinking and rapid talking.

These musings are occasioned by the English Institute Annual, 1942, only recently published. Certainly this issue has much to interest every 18th century scholar. A number of the essays should be "musts" on every one of our readers' lists.

In recent years many people have been struck by the strange dearth of competent criticism concerned with the art and theory of biography. Where one can find literally hundreds of discussions of

the problems of the drama, the novel, and the short story, only scattered references can be turned up about biographical technique. In fact, it would almost be possible to combine into one compact volume all that is significant which has been written about the critical theory of biography.

For this reason, the first three papers in the present Annual will be particularly welcomed (Johnsonians, surely, must be interested in that part of literature which he liked best). Under the title, "Interpretation in Biography", and with a forward by Donald Stauffer, the group consists of "The Ethics of Biography" by Andre Maurois; "The Development, Use, and Abuse of Interpretation in Biography" by Newman White; and "The Humanistic Bases of Biographical Interpretation" by Arthur M. Wilson.

The temptation to quote at length from these stimulating discussions is almost too great to resist; but perhaps we had better not spoil your own pleasure of discovery. Read them through and let us have some discussions on any points of interpretation with which you disagree.

The second group of papers, "Authenticity and Attribution" also contains much of importance for us. Herbert Davis's "Problems in the Canon of Swift" obviously falls directly in our period; and Giles Dawson's "Authenticity and Attribution of Written Matter", while chiefly devoted to Elizabethan illustrations, poses problems which have universal interest. If we only mention casually the other papers by Bentley, Murray and Hayakawa, it is not that they, too, are not worth reading. But after all, this is a Johnsonian News Letter.

In conclusion, may we repeat -- what we have said in the past -- our heartiest congratulations and thanks to Rudolf Kirk, who has made the Institute possible. May we soon have another meeting -- and someday see more English Institute Annuals on our shelves!

AUCTION SALES

From the press releases of the Parke-Bernet Galleries we have not been able to find many 18th century items of interest for our readers. For the past two months the emphasis seems to have been on finely bound sets, rare early printed books, and historical manuscripts.

The following, however, may be worth mentioning:

Feb. 1 -- the library of H. J. Sachs, Stamford, Conn. Included were a Kilmarnock Edition of Burns; a copy of James Beattie's Poems, inscribed by Robert Burns with three original stanzas for his little friend Susan Logan Park; autographs of Pope, Richardson and others.

Feb. 7-8 -- Among first editions listed are: the Panter copy of Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield; Fielding's Tom Jones; The History of Sanford and Merton inscribed by the author, Thomas Day. Among the fine bindings is a copy of Gay's Beggar's Opera in a Rivière binding with miniatures by Miss Currie.

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DEPARTMENT OF OVERSTATEMENT

Here is a claim to mull over at your leisure. In the New Statesman and Nation for Dec. 18, 1943, G.W. Stonier, in the department "Books in General", refers to reading Evelyn Waugh's novel Put Out More Flags, where he had found the statement that the "best biography in the English Language" is -- not Boswell or Lockhart or Strachey -- but (guess wildly) J. T. Smith's Nollekens and His Times. Then Stonier goes on to devote a page to a discussion of Smith's very entertaining work. We wonder how many have read it? And why do you think Waugh rates it so high?

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